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STATE

HISTORICAL

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CERTIFICATION OF STATE REGISTER LISTING

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: House Building

Address: 729-731 Massachusetts, Lawrence, KS

Legal: Lot 35, Original Townsite, Lawrence, KS

County: Douglas

Owner: Mr. and Mrs. George W. Francis

Address: 1916 Countryside Lane, Lawrence, KS 66044

National Register eligible

State Register eligible ___X__

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on December 9, 2000.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

State Historic Preservation Officer_

9/95

1. Name of Property

historic name the House Building

other names/site number Miller's Block

2. Location

street and number 729 - 731 Massachusetts Street

city or town Lawrence, KS Douglas code 045 zip code 66044-

- 3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A
- 4. National Park Service Certification N/A
- 5. Classification

Ownership

Category of property Number of Resources Within Property

x private

x building(s)

Contributing 1

building(s)

Total

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Current Functions

Social; meeting hall; hall of other fraternal, patriotic,

or political organization (third floor)

Government; post office

Commerce/Trade; specialty store,

clothing store (729)

Commerce/Trade; restaurant, pizza palace (729)

Commerce/Trade; restaurant,

Commercial/Trade; restaurant,

doughnut shop (729)

cafe/brewery (729)

Commerce/Trade; specialty store, furniture store

(729/731)

Commerce/Trade; specialty store, billiards (731)

Commerce/Trade; specialty store,

Commerce/Trade; specialty store,

sporting goods (731)

sporting goods (731)

Commerce/Trade; business, office building (729½)

Commerce/Trade; business, office building

 $(729\frac{1}{2})$

7. Description

Architectural Classification

late 19th and early 20th century American

movements; commercial style, other, commercial block

Materials (see categories)

foundation, stone, not visible from front street level
walls, brick, glass, wood
roof, both built-up felt and tar and
composition shingle, not visible from

10 - NO.

front street level

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

The House Building at 729 - 731 Massachusetts Street, Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas, was originally built (1858, 1860) as "Miller's Block," and extensively remodeled in 1921, which enabled it to continue its principal role in the development and progress of the downtown business community. The House Building is listed on the Lawrence Register of Historic Places.

The House Building is a two-part commercial block with a double-wide, buff-brick front. Massachusetts Street is the city's "main street," and this building's 50-foot front not only faces Massachusetts Street on the east, but also is located in the heart of the city's commercial center — a vibrant downtown with a city population of 82,000.¹ The building sits mid-block, in the core of the historical city, among buildings of mostly similar styles — similar widths, similar heights, aligned cornices, vertical windows and decorated parapets and cornices.

The first building in Miller's Block was completed in 1858 (731 Massachusetts Street,² the

¹City Clerk Raymond Hummert, City of Lawrence, Kan., Feb. 12, 1998.

²Miller's original, July 27, 1858, Article of Agreement specifies 24.5 feet x 60 feet for the south "half," 731 Massachusetts Street. The March 24, 1860, agreement calls for a nearly mirror image for the north "half," 729 Massachusetts Street — 26 foot width and a 90 foot depth. Hence the two adjoining buildings were sometimes referred to as a double building. Both original Articles of Agreement are now deposited in Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

south "half") and the attached building completed in 1860 (729 Massachusetts Street, the north "half"). As the "House Building," the north half now measures about 25 feet by 100 feet. The south half is 25 feet by 117 feet and abuts the alley on the west. The House Building follows the visual patterns along Massachusetts Street, exemplified by narrow lots and abutments to other buildings on the sides. The House Building shares facade arrangements and components with many of its Massachusetts Street neighbors.

Three stone pilaster bases support the brick and stone side and center walls on the front.

The foundation, not seen from the front street level, is stone.

The two store fronts are nearly mirror images with the exception of a recessed secondary entrance, which leads to the second story, located near the center of the building — the south end of the north storefront. The two storefronts have recessed entries at both the north and south ends of the facade, in addition to three large (approximately five feet wide and six and one-half feet tall) plate glass, display windows above patterned wood bulkheads. There are eight inoperable, translucent, Florentine-period style glass, transom-type windows (roughly five feet tall and slightly more than two feet wide) above the south display windows as well as that store's entry; and nine identical windows above the north display windows, the north retail entry and the recessed second-floor entry area. Retail signage on the north consists of a separate sign within a narrow, more than a foot high, sign band above the display windows. The south business uses that sign band for its roller awning with signage on its leading edge. (Both street-level occupants use, within their stores, neon signage visible through the display windows from the street.) Characteristically, the street level part of the two-part commercial block is public space.

The second story is four bays, each with a pair of 1-over-1, double hung aluminum windows with insulated glass (the south four windows were installed in 1978, the north four in 1980). Each pair has a separate stone lugsill, but is topped with a continuous lintel band of brick stretchers, then headers. Centered in the cornice area is a stone plaque with the name "HOUSE" engraved there. On each side of the identification are two horizontal banks of inset brick, then five bands, laid in a soldier course vertically, with corbeling above the horizontal bands. Under

the parapet, along another course of bricks, alternate bricks are pulled out approximately one inch. Another typicality in two-part commercial blocks, "the upper zone contains more private spaces, such as offices.... This form was prevalent for over a century, from the 1850s through the 1950s."³

The irregular roof line consists of three different levels topped with capstones. The roof itself is not visible from the street. Parts of 11 chimneys protrude above the roof line, all reduced to two-story level and at varying heights. These chimneys are capped and no longer function to help heat or circulate air. A parapet divides the original double building and extends from the front toward the west about 60 feet. The parapet is covered by glazed clay caps that read "W.S. Dickey, Kansas City, Mo., USA." The roof is built-up, felt and tar, which slopes to the alley, except for the northwest 25 x 40 feet end, which is hipped, with composition shingles.

Above the door of the recessed stairway leading to second floor is a glass window with a pattern unique to this building. Then a 25-step stairway leads to second floor. The hall in the front area, approximately 12 feet deep by 18 feet wide, narrows to about eight feet wide for another 16 feet, then narrows again to four feet wide. At the top of the stairs and to the south, is an archway leading to four office spaces. A similar archway in the back hall, south side, leads to an alcove with three office doors.

There are two styles of architecture here. One difference appears in the wood frame trim—the north side of the hall has mostly rounded trim around the windows and doors, the south side has mostly squared-cornered trim. Entries to some of the south offices have curved corners from floor to ceiling. In contrast, some entries to the north offices do not have curved corners, but those curves may appear within the office suites on both sides of the windows. Originally, the south building stood alone. When the north building was added, it probably joined both second floors. (A parapet prevents passage between buildings in the existing attic crawl space that was once third floor.) However, the width of the second-floor hall, north side, indicates it could have

³Deon Wolfenbarger, "Lawrence's Downtown Historic Building Survey," (Lawrence Historic Resources Commission and the City of Lawrence, Kan., August 1994), 17.

accommodated a stairway⁴ to the third floor that was most likely removed in 1921. Evidence of the former third floor meeting spaces can be seen and accessed by way of three small, cubbyhole-type doors (from the hall near the main skylight and near the skylights in both office spaces #200 and #204).

The second-floor hall flooring is fine-grained, solid oak. Some board lengths run more than 14 feet. The kick board is solid wood, seven and one-half inches in height. The quarter round between the floor and kick board is a full inch wide.

Interior hall walls are mostly plastered stone. The parapet supporting wall is 13 inches thick. Within each second-floor office, the north and south walls are plastered brick or stone. Some interior office walls are lath and plaster. Some are plaster board. Some have a painted, non-woven fabric covered wood paneling. Office areas vary in size from 100 square feet to 300 square feet.

There are three windows with Florentine-style, patterned glass on the north side of the hall wall, which lets light from the hall into those office spaces. Another like-patterned window on the south wall, below the main skylight, six and one-half feet from the floor, has a drop-down-top opening about 5.5 feet wide by 2.5 feet tall.

On the north wall between #200 and #216 is a display cabinet designed to hide a portion of the electric service entrance, to provide frequently used janitor supplies for tenants, to show off some historical information about the building and to display a tenant directory. The framework is railcar siding stained walnut; but the restored, floor-length doors originally opened to the alley from Francis Sporting Goods.

The second-floor hall is lined with entry doors to eighteen offices, two restrooms and a rear exit. Inside some of these office suites, other doors connect interior spaces to each other. Woodwork in the hall is stained walnut with a satin finish. Above the office doors are eleven

⁴Part of a stairway riser had been used for bracing in the crawlspace above second-floor. Soft bricks, once a part of the third floor walls, were a part of the clutter found there, also.

transoms, six of which are operable. All but one of the office doors has a glass inset in the top portion, mostly Florentine-style glass. There are two sets of sliding glass panels in lieu of transoms in one office.

The hall ceiling is plastered and painted a dark green. All telephone and internet lines are grouped and tied along the south side of the ceiling and painted to match the ceiling, an honest yet unobtrusive treatment. Mostly, the restoration begun in 1988 removed additives applied over the years — multi-layered paint, shabby dropped-ceiling tiles, inexpensive wall paneling, worn asphalt tiles, superfluous wiring and flourescent light fixtures. The only added features were incandescent lighting fixtures representing a 1920s look.

At 731 Massachusetts Street, street level, the front to back 65-foot public area is retail and is used to display and sell merchandise. The floor in the store's front 60 feet is wall-to-wall carpeting over a more than full one-inch thick plank flooring. Some wall areas have been stripped of plaster to expose brick-and/or stone-backed niches that further emphasize displays. A false ceiling supports small spotlights to illuminate merchandise. A wall with a pocket door in the middle separates the front from the back 50 feet. This back room, a more private area, stores additional merchandise, includes two 3- by 3-foot dressing rooms, a 7- by 8-foot office and a stairway leading to the basement. The back room has plastered walls; high ceilings; well-worn, natural wood floor boards; a small four- by four-foot rest room (with a small, barred window on the north); and a four- by six-foot walk-in storage closet (with a small, barred window on the west). The space (about five feet by five feet), between the rest room and the closet, has another small, barred window on the north.

The back room area stores additional merchandise along the walls. Tables and counters stretch down the center aisle for sending, receiving, unpacking, counting, sorting, lettering and pricing merchandise. The west wall interior is also plastered and includes a door in the middle for alley delivery — the interior floor level is at a convenient height for most delivery trucks in the alley. On both sides of the exit/entry is a bank of windows about five feet wide and 15 feet tall. The remaining wall has a plastered interior and a brick exterior.

The crawl space under this 25- by 100-foot area (731 Massachusetts Street) was dug in 1980 to shore up the building's walls (the rock foundation had no footing) by pouring concrete support "shelves" along the south and north walls; to store lines of merchandise; and to expose the steam pipes that needed replacement at the time. (The building was built at grade, but the main floor was lowered in 1862⁵ and the dirt floor basement level lost its head room.) The space on the dirt floor tapered from about a ten foot height in the boiler room area on the west end to less than a foot of crawl space at the east end. On the west end of this basement area, a door leads to a 12-foot square boiler room and to another door that joins an exit stairway leading to the alley.

At 729 Massachusetts Street, currently a micro-brewery and restaurant, the floor was stripped and refinished, the rock walls were exposed and a false ceiling was removed. The front 84-foot depth includes a dining area, a bar and a kitchen area (toward the back). In the last 16 feet or so on the west, a hall leads to rest rooms on the south, a janitor storage area on the north and a back alley exit in between. A stairway to the mezzanine remains, along with a new, more public stairway leading to a 25- by 16-foot long dining area. The mezzanine overlooks the front part of the dining area downstairs. The back area includes some office space, a walk-in cooler and freezer along the north side and additional rest rooms on the west. The ceiling in the downstairs front and the mezzanine dining area is similar to a blown-up bead board pattern. The

^{**}The Lawrence Republican*, July 17, 1862: "Lowering to Grade -- Good progress is being made in equalizing the grade on the west side of Massachusetts Street. The work is now proceeded as far as Miller's Block, where T.B. Eldridge has men at work lowering the floor of his store to a level with the new grade. The work will be completed, and the store re opened for business, by the end of the present week." This may explain the joist pockets in the stone walls on the Massachusetts Street level found when the plastered wall surface was chipped away in 1995.

⁶In the 30s and 40s, the mezannine was used as Miller Furniture and an accessway was cut between 729 and 731 Massachusetts on the main floor. (The stairway access is now closed.) That information comes from a personal interview between Mrs. Jean (Jack) Miller and Carol Francis, June 20, 1986. In the 50s the mezzanine provided space for a band, a dance floor and a beer-drinking area for Earl's Pizza Parlor. When Jennings Daylight Donuts opened in 1978, the main floor had a false ceiling throughout.

floors are pine plank. On the main level the exterior door to the west abuts a loading dock with stairs that lead down to the alley.

A basement below the 729 side was dug in 1995. Prior to this time, a person could stand at the east end, on the dirt floor at the foot of the walled-off stairway, but there was no way to get to the west (alley) end besides crawling. The dig converted the crawl space to commercial use, exposed the steam pipes for possible repair or replacement, strengthened the north and south foundations and added an exit. Poured concrete walls support the original dirt walls below the foundation stones. The newly poured concrete floor lends stability and provides a consistent ceiling height. Currently the basement stores beer-brewing equipment, grain, storage vats and a walk-in cooler. At the west end, a door leads up about six steps to the alley level.

The House Building's exterior walls on the south, the north (those that do not abut other structures) and the west of 729 Massachusetts Street are stucco, were recently repaired and were painted with Thorolastic. The back of 731 Massachusetts Street is brick and glass.

The property is in excellent condition due to incremental repairs, maintenance and restoration, which respect the building's historical past. In 1995 the front brick was cleaned and pointed and the front window arrangements were replaced to most nearly match existing store-front pictures of the 1921 era — part of the extensive renovations done by Irma House.

Section 8, Historical Significance

The House Building is historically significant for its role in the early development of downtown Lawrence, Kansas; for its drastic renovation in 1921 that helped initiate a period of renewal along main street; and for its continued commercial presence during the life of the community.

Early day information about this building is part of its historical fabric.⁷ Without it, there is no present.

⁷Carol Buhler Francis, *The House Building: My Search for Its Foundations*, Transom Works Press, 1990.

The 50-front-foot building is located on the original townsite in the heart of downtown, Lot 35, 729 - 731 Massachusetts Street. It was built (1858 and 1860)⁸ by Josiah Miller as a three-story, speculative gamble to lure eastern settlers to this upstart, frontier town in Kansas Territory.

Miller had previously scouted the whole Kansas - Nebraska Territory, then picked this place to establish his business ventures immediately after the Kansas - Nebraska Act became final in 1854. He came specifically to start a newspaper, to speculate in land and to practice law. His 1858, brick and stone structure became "the Postoffice building" with Miller the postmaster.

On the north half of Lot 35, Miller built a duplicate structure in 1860. Together, the two buildings were referred to as "Miller Block."

Miller's impressive, grand mid-block statement stood well above its one-story, wood frame neighbors. Miller's Block was his invitation to prospective settlers from the east. Such a substantial building not only suggested permanence in itself, but it also implied that this city was here to stay.

He leased the south space to Jacob House for his St. Louis Clothing Store, which sold mostly "Gents' Furnishings" in 1862. House was in the building when Quantrill's raiders demanded he be their "resident guide who would direct the free booters and killers to the buildings and men they wished to destroy." House's life was not only spared, but also he stayed in that same location more than fifty years. "He was part of the upbuilding of the town...."

⁸Miller's Articles of Agreement, which verify construction dates and construction methods, were donated to Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

⁹The Kansas Free State.

¹⁰"St. Louis Clothing Store" advertisement, *The Lawrence Republican*, 26 June 1862.

¹¹Allen Crafton, Free State Fortress (Lawrence, Kansas: The World Company, 1954), 192.

^{12&}quot;Was a Pioneer," (Lawrence Journal-World, 25 Aug. 1913).

When House died in 1913, he was considered the oldest clothing merchant in the State of Kansas.¹⁴

His son, Robert E. House, had already bought into the "J. House & Son" clothing business. Robert lived until 1921 when his wife, Irma House, inherited the place. She removed the third story, replaced the porous red brick, added the House name to the facade and remodeled the upstairs office spaces.

Then, for the 1860's structure, Miller duplicated the south half for an adjacent building on the north. He leased it to Joseph Wharton to sell "Dry Goods and Groceries¹⁵ and no intoxicating liquors." Later, Wharton's daughter, Lida, married Thomas B. Eldridge. She owned the building. He owned the dry goods stock. 17

Jacob House and Lida Eldridge bought separate Aetna Fire Insurance Policies in 1864 — only a few months after Quantrill's raid. Primary documents confirm building dates, construction methods and general specifications. One question printed on each policy asks, "Has this building ever been on fire?" Individually, House and Eldridge responded, "Never."

The building's extreme transformation took place after World War II. Times were ripe for

¹³"A Long Time With Us," (Lawrence Journal-World, 26 Aug. 1913), 4.

¹⁴"Jacob House, A Pioneer is Dead," (Lawrence Journal-World, 25 Aug. 1913).

¹⁵"The Ruins of Lawrence, Kansas," an artist's rendering that appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, Sept. 19, 1863, which shows the DRY GOODS AND GROCERIES sign on the only building downtown that survived Quantrill's Raid.

¹⁶Josiah Miller, business contracts, leases, etc, (lease of Joseph Wharton, 4:I13, Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries).

¹⁷At one time called the Eldridge & Ford "Country Store."

¹⁸No. 109, Aetna Fire Policy for Lida W. Eldridge, 1864; No. #116, Aetna Fire Policy for Jacob House, 1864 (from an early-day Lawrence, Kansas, insurance record book owned by Charlton-Manley Insurance agency).

"different forms and ... new materials." People across the nation were eager to cast off traditional appearances and old ways of doing things. Folks welcomed the changing concept, its simplified style, its fresh, visual perceptions.

Such a nation-wide architectural trend combined with a local series of events: Robert E. House died in 1921. His widow (Irma House) inherited the three-story structure. She kept the building as a financial resource to support herself and young daughter.

Her severe renovations of 1921 removed the building's third story, replaced its front brick and installed its "HOUSE" identification.²⁰ Repairs included second floor — its hall and office spaces.

Her renewal created a more modern image with lighter, cleaner looking, buff-colored brick in contrast to the previous, more commonplace, dark, dingy, soft, red brick buildings downtown. The building shed its "busy" embellishments now replaced with clean lines, refrained decorations.

Mrs. House's atypical facelift contributed to a lively new feeling on Massachusetts Street. Her House Building represented one of the frontrunners, one of the catalysts, for additional alterations to commercial storefronts downtown during Lawrence's "University Town period (1900 - 1945)."²¹

The House Building continued its commercial presence downtown to fill the entire 50-front-foot, narrow lot and to abut both downtown's front sidewalk and its adjacent side buildings—row construction, common walls—along this prime location for commercial activity. The downtown building remained a two-part commercial block, the most common commercial property type throughout the country. "This type is characterized by a horizontal division into two distinct zones.... The two-part division reflects differences in use inside. The single-story

¹⁹Dale Nimz, "Living with History," nd, 43.

²⁰Irma House was quite proud of that name. Her relatiaves believe this may have been her memorial to Robert.

²¹Nimz, 89.

lower zone, at street level, indicates public spaces such as retail stores.... The upper zone suggests more private spaces, including offices.... The type ... is readily found in almost all forms of commercial development, dominating the core of small cities and towns...."²²

At the time, this particular two-part commercial block had already contributed to the community's economic health more than 60 years. Updated rental spaces could attract the most desirable tenants and provide a steady income.

The 1921 revitalization quickly attracted new office occupants. On the main street level, the Robert E. House clothing store $(729)^{23}$ operated under new owners and new signage. Next door south (731) was Clarence "Swede" Wilson's billiard parlor, a tenant from 1913 to 1944 — more than 30 years. "The second floor was at the time [1921] one of the central office buildings in town. The day after it was opened for tenants ... J.B. Wilson and F.B. Dodds, veteran Lawrence attorneys, moved into two of the office suites. Dr. Edward Bumgardner [a dentist] had moved in ... the day before." Bumgardner continued to office in the House Building through the 20's. Wilson and Dodds supplied legal services there into the 40s.

"Downtown" at that time included New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont streets from Sixth to Eleventh. Downtown offices were important because they attracted other people. Downtown served as the central business, service and social gathering place. Downtown was the drawing card, the *only* social meeting place except for events held at the University of Kansas.

Throughout the next fifty years, the Lawrence, Kansas, economy matched the nation's trends toward boom or bust. Its population nearly doubled over time, from 12,456 in 1920 to

²²Richard Longstreth, The Buildings of Main Street (The Preservation Press, 1987), 24.

²³The Robert E. House store was a prominent clothing store on main street. It carried "only the 'real' brand names, the shoes and shirts and suits....men's haberdashery," said Frederick House Lowenstein. He was the son of Hattie House Lowenstein, and grandson of Jacob House.

²⁴"Jacob House Building, A Quantrill Landmark, Is Sold to Ottawa Man" (Lawrence Daily Journal-World, Lawrence, Kan., 17 May 1946), 2.

23,351 in 1950.25 The downtown marketplace remained the city's central drawing card.

Since its construction as Miller's Block in 1858 and 1860, through its severe renovation in 1921 as the House Building, and beginning a new century, this building was constructed for and continues to be a business, service and social gathering place in the heart of downtown.

Throughout its nearly 150-year existence and almost 80 years beyond its drastic remodeling, this place has provided a wide-range of well-known merchants, restauranteurs, attorneys, dentists, oculists, optometrists, physicians, osteopaths and a chiropodist — along with a sprinkling of real estate, insurance, land lease and loan businesses and "others" such as the Christian Science Reading Room, an auctioneer, an orthopedist, a billiards operator and a beauty parlor.

Irma House sold the building in 1936 to R.C. Miller. The Miller family sold furniture there until 1946. A number of owners followed.²⁶ Successive landlords added popular, cosmetic touches of the day.

Restoration efforts correspond with photographic documentation that respect the 1921 transformation plans of Irma house. Rental income supports its preservation. Both interior and exterior are well-maintained.

The building's coal fired furnace gave way to gas and electricity. Telecomunications replaced the "voice mail" of earlier days. "Gents' Furnishings" became athletic equipment. Today's tenants offer commercial products and professional services unforeseen in 1858.

In this document, "Appendix A" follows, which compares the number of building permits by population. "Appendix B" shows tenants in the House Building, 1921 - 1947.

²⁵World War II brought Sunflower Ordnance Works, which at its peak employed 32,000 people in its construction and munitions production plant.

²⁶The original Abstracts of Title are now part of the Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, and reproduced in Francis' *The House Building: My Search for Its Foundations* book as "Appendix A," 165. "Appendix B" provides a list of Grantor, Grantee records, 183. "Appendix C" covers some House Building tenants over time.

Summaries comparing the number of building permits to population.

Year	No. permits	Value	Population ²⁷
1920			12,456
1923			15,062
1926	192	\$521,385	13,822
1927	241	708,495	
1928	161	384,425	16,608
1929	142	306,835	
1930	175	426,577	13,726
1931	148	109,006	
1932	72	92,405	
1933	72	62,025	
1934	95	138,316	
1935	108	80,034	
1936	125	124,355	14,167
1937	115	304,179	
1938	137	151,913	
1939	96	204,095	14,267
1940	95	154,515	14,390
1941	100	122,720	
1942	136	171,470	13,500
1943	83	62,885	15,356
1944		13,665	
1950			23,351

²⁷The ten-year figures in bold face come from the official population records at the Institute for Public Policy and Business Research, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, Jan. 20, 2000. Other figures were mostly gathered from *Journal-World* reports.

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